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Review of the modified procedures for consideration and approval of proposals for country programmes of cooperation

Summary

In decision 2002/4 (E/ICEF/2002/8/Rev.1), the Executive Board adopted new procedures for the process of consideration and approval of new country programmes of cooperation. The Board requested the Executive Director to report during the annual session in 2005 on progress and any issues arising from implementation of the present decision.

As shown in the present report, 35 country programme documents for new programmes of cooperation have been approved by the Executive Board under the modified procedures. A further 27 are expected to be presented to the Board for consideration and approval in 2005. Based on these experiences, the modified procedure is considered to have promoted the harmonized and joint programming process with national partners and among United Nations agencies at country level, to have ensured the opportunity for the Executive Board to provide substantive comments on new programmes, and to have supported improvements in the quality and results-orientation of programme documents, while retaining necessary flexibility.

The modified process

1. Under the new procedures mandated by Executive Board decision 2002/4 (E/ICEF/2002/8/Rev.1), which took effect in 2003, a draft country programme document (CPD) is prepared by the Government and UNICEF, within the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) where one exists, based on

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the agreements of a Joint Strategy Meeting between the Government and United Nations agencies. The draft CPD is submitted to the Executive Board for consideration and comments and for approval of the aggregate programme budget totals. Following the Board's comments, the CPD is revised with the Government as appropriate, and a summary results matrix is prepared and included in the document. The matrix summarizes the key strategic improvements to the country situation which will be attributable to the UNICEF-assisted country programme. The expected key results in the matrix are linked to the priorities of the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan (MTSP), as well as to the expected outcomes of the UNDAF (as shown in the UNDAF results matrix), the Plan of Action of the General Assembly Special Session on Children, and the Millennium Declaration and its Development Goals. The revised CPD including the summary results matrix is posted on the UNICEF website (www.unicef.org) in October for further review by members of the Executive Board. It is approved by the Board on a no-objection basis at the first regular (January) session in the first year of the new country programme cycle, unless at least five Executive Board members have indicated a desire to discuss the revised CPD within six weeks of it being posted.

2. The modified provisions for CPDs provide for the development of shorter and more focused documents based on national plans and priorities. The format of the CPD is harmonized with those of other members of the Executive Committee of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG). It provides an analysis of the major challenges facing children and women in the country and the priority areas for children to be addressed with UNICEF cooperation; lessons learned from prior cooperation; the contributions that UNICEF assistance is expected to make to national priorities, goals and policy frameworks; the contribution of the proposed programme to the goals of the UNDAF; the linkages with the current UNICEF MTSP; and details of the programme components that make up the country programme. It describes how the programme strategies should realistically lead to the achievement of the expected results; the required regular and other resources; the partnerships that will be key to the achievement of results; and the programme management arrangements, including mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation.

Implementation of Executive Board decision 2002/4

3. Following the adoption of decision 2002/4, the secretariat issued new UNICEF programming guidelines throughout the organization; held orientation sessions for the staff of the Regional Offices, which support and oversee the country programme preparation process; and monitored the implementation process. The guidelines complemented and reinforced the United Nations inter-agency guidelines on preparation of the Common Country Assessment (CCA) and UNDAF, and also emphasized inter-agency collaboration and alignment with national priorities.

4. In 2003 and 2004, the secretariat presented a total of 35 CPDs to the Executive Board. All were discussed by the Board, commented on, revised and subsequently approved. Including the 27 CPDs that the secretariat expects to submit to the Board in 2005, the total number of CPDs submitted under the new procedures will reach 62, representing some 39 percent of current UNICEF programmes of cooperation.

5. The table below provides the number of CPDs, by region, submitted to the Executive Board in 2003 and 2004 as well as those planned for submission in 2005. The respective countries are indicated in the annex.

Table
Country programme documents submitted to the Executive Board, 2003-2005

	Number of CPDs submitted			
Region	*2003*	*2004*	*2005**	*2003-2005*
Eastern and Southern Africa	4	5	3	12
West and Central Africa	4	0	6	10
Americas and the Caribbean	1	2	2	5
East Asia and the Pacific	2	2	6	10
South Asia	1	0	2	3
Middle East and North Africa	1	0	1	2
Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States	0	13	7	20
Total	**13**	**22**	**27**	**62**

* Due for presentation to the June and September 2005 Executive Board sessions.

6. Eleven of the 13 CPDs submitted in 2003 and 18 of the 22 CPDs submitted in 2004 were developed as part of a full United Nations joint programming process. Countries which did not prepare CCAs or UNDAFs included, in 2003, Congo, Somalia and those hosting Palestinian children and women; and in 2004, Malaysia, Iraq and the Southern Cone countries of Latin America (Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, for which one joint CPD was prepared). In those instances, UNICEF closely coordinated the CPD preparation with other United Nations agencies and development partners through available frameworks, such as consolidated emergency plans and other inter-agency mechanisms, including the United Nations Strategic Plan for Iraq and the United Nations Transition Plan for Somalia.

7. Under the new procedures, the Executive Board commented extensively on draft CPDs and commended the often extensive engagement of national, local and international partners in the preparatory process. The Board also used the occasion to provide extensive feedback and suggestions which further strengthened the quality of the CPDs. Most notably, the Board highlighted the importance of: focusing clearly on national and UNDAF priorities relating to children; strengthening the monitoring and evaluation components of the draft country programmes; and of giving strong attention to marginalized populations, including orphans, minority communities, women and families in poverty. In response to the Board's concerns, more programme proposals in 2004 drew on the observations and recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the respective State party reports.

8. Executive Board members have further stressed the need for UNICEF to ensure that improvements in the quality of the CPDs as planning and budget documents are maintained in the implementation stage of programmes of cooperation. To this end, UNICEF has: (a) monitored the quality of Country Programme Action Plans and Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plans, which form the basis for programme cooperation among partners at country level; (b) updated the Programme Policy and Procedure Manual and accompanying staff

learning materials to reflect the modified procedures and to promote improved programme management and implementation practices; (c) revised the guidelines for the preparation of Country Programme Management Plans, with an emphasis on linking human resources management to the achievement of programme results; and (d) provided targeted quality assurance and technical support from the regional level to programme development and implementation in both regular and emergency contexts, increasingly in collaboration with other United Nations agencies.

Review of experience and results

9. The submission of the draft CPD to the annual session of the Board in June has allowed for: (a) early approval of the aggregate programme budget totals; (b) on the basis of this approval and the draft CPD itself, the timely and well-synchronized preparation of the country programme management plan and the integrated budget; and (c) for timely preparation and signature with national authorities of the Country Programme Action Plan as the formal agreement with Government on the programme of cooperation.

10. While most of the draft CPDs have been submitted for consideration at the annual session, the procedures have also provided sufficient flexibility to enable submission to the second regular session of CPDs for countries that are facing special circumstances, e.g., those affected by natural disasters or complex emergencies.

11. An important innovation of the new process has been the inclusion of a summary results matrix in the revised CPD. This incorporates the key results to be achieved as well as their respective indicators and means of verification, to allow for a strengthened results-based approach to programme management, monitoring and reporting. A review of the CPDs prepared and submitted to the Board in 2003 and 2004 indicates encouraging patterns:

(a) The key results contained in the CPD summary results matrices are closely linked with the broader UNDAF outcomes. The programmes elaborate how the major results of UNICEF cooperation are expected to contribute to the achievement of the UNDAF outcomes, national priorities and international goals and commitments. However, further improvements are needed in some aspects of the results matrices, including in the setting of baselines;

(b) The CPDs (including objectives, strategies and results matrices) have maintained strong linkages between the approved priorities of the organizational MTSP, the goals of the Millennium Declaration, the UNDAFs and national priorities, including those of poverty reduction strategies. The CPDs are able to elaborate the expected role of UNICEF in such national partnership frameworks as poverty reduction strategies and sector-wide approaches, and the expected collaboration with international and regional bodies;

(c) Compared with earlier country programme documents submitted to the Executive Board, the CPDs developed in 2003 and 2004 are more results-oriented and human rights-based. They demonstrate a stronger focus on marginalized children and the poorest families and on strengthening national and local capacities for meeting children's rights, including in crisis situations, particularly through the agreed priorities of the MTSP and on the basis of the UNICEF Core Commitments to Children in emergencies;

(d) The incorporation and mainstreaming of measures for emergency preparedness and response to possible or actual crises affecting children has improved in the CPDs, with the support of the Executive Board, and should be systematized further. Also evident in the period under review is the growing importance of transitional frameworks for post-crisis recovery, and their reflection in the relevant CPDs.

12. The modified procedures have contributed to streamlining the programme preparation process. They have reduced duplication and have facilitated collaboration among agencies through the joint programming approach, while maintaining a sound, country-based and results-oriented planning process under the leadership of national authorities. In particular, the modified process has facilitated the development of UNICEF-assisted country programmes of cooperation within the priorities and strategies of the UNDAF and the working procedures of the United Nations country team. Harmonizing the UNICEF programme preparation and approval procedures with those of other UNDG members in the context of United Nations reform has strengthened the complementarity of roles of the different agencies at country level, including the identification of joint programmes and projects across an increasing range of development priorities.

13. The new procedures have also effectively taken into account the timing of the preparation of the CCA and UNDAF, and clearly recognize the role of these country-specific analytical and strategic framework documents as a basis for sound programme development.

14. Under the modified procedures, the development of country programmes continues to benefit from decentralized support from the regional offices and regional management teams of UNICEF and other United Nations agencies, including the incorporation of regional perspectives, as appropriate, on issues related to children's and women's rights in proposed country programme strategies.

Conclusions

15. The implementation of Executive Board decision 2002/4 has resulted in: (a) value added by the Board's substantive comments on the positive attributes as well as areas for improvement in the draft CPDs; (b) the use of the summary results matrix to more systematically orient programmes to the achievement of key results for children; (c) the further advancement of operational modalities for harmonization with other United Nations agencies and strengthening of the programming process; and (d) sufficient flexibility to take account of exceptional country circumstances.

16. Implementation experiences have reaffirmed the role of national partners in their primary responsibility for the formulation of the country programme of cooperation.

17. The modified and harmonized process has provided opportunities for many countries to further reorient national efforts and cooperation with United Nations agencies towards the sustainable achievement of the Millennium Declaration, its Development Goals and other national and international commitments.

18. The development of the CPDs — based in most cases on the CCA, the UNDAF and the Joint Strategy Meeting — provides an opportunity for Governments to ensure the involvement of United Nations system and other

multilateral organizations, bilateral donors and civil society organizations, as appropriate, in the process of programme formulation. It also provides an opportunity to promote participatory discussion of child-focused development strategies across a range of sectors and national institutions.

19. No changes are recommended at present to the procedures for consideration and approval of proposals for country programmes of cooperation which were adopted by the UNICEF Executive Board in 2002 and which began implementation in 2003. Regular and ongoing discussions are held among the UNDG Executive Committee agencies on experience with the harmonized procedures. In addition, discussions have been initiated by the UNDG Programme Group on the design and testing of a possible common country programme approach, with a pilot initiative to be undertaken in Cape Verde in conjunction with the development of a pilot joint United Nations office.

Annex

Country programme documents submitted to the Executive Board

Region	*2003*	*2004*	*2005**
Eastern and Southern Africa	Angola (1-yr. prog.) Kenya Madagascar (1-yr. prog.) Somalia	Angola (full 5-yr. prog.) Burundi Madagascar (full 5-yr. prog.) Zimbabwe	Namibia Swaziland Uganda
West and Central Africa	Benin Congo Niger Sierra Leone	Cape Verde	Burkina Faso Cape Verde Chad Democratic Republic of the Congo Ghana Liberia
Americas and the Caribbean	Ecuador	Southern Cone countries (Argentina, Chile & Uruguay) Guatemala	Guyana Peru
East Asia and the Pacific	Democratic People's Republic of Korea Philippines	Malaysia Philippines	Cambodia China Indonesia Myanmar Timor-Leste Viet Nam
South Asia	Pakistan		Afghanistan Bangladesh
Middle East and North Africa	Palestinian children and women in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Occupied Palestinian Territory	Iran Iraq	Palestinian children and women in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Occupied Palestinian Territory
Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States		Armenia Azerbaijan Bosnia and Herzegovina Kazakhstan Kyrgyzstan Romania Serbia and Montenegro Tajikistan The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Turkmenistan Uzbekistan	Albania Belarus Bulgaria Georgia Russian Federation Turkey Ukraine
	13	**22**	**27**

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